

This Week in Congress

October 31, 2005

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Kansas and Fort Riley Win Big as BRAC Concludes

This week I was pleased to announce the conclusion of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, which works to better align military forces and reduce surplus military infrastructure. In the report, all four Kansas military bases - Fort Riley, Fort Leavenworth, Forbes Field and McConnell Air Force Base - are to remain open and experience growth. This week's vote in Congress was the final step in the BRAC process, and it means good news for Kansas.

Among the best news for our state is that the division headquarters of the Army's First Infantry Division, also known as the "Big Red One," will return to Fort Riley from Germany. In addition, by 2011 Fort Riley is expected to house a total of five brigades, employing over 20,000 people.

Fort Riley's success in the BRAC process is a testament to the hard work of its surrounding communities, where the support for our service men and women has been tremendous. From housing to schools to transportation, they have really come together to create a good quality of life for incoming soldiers and their families.

The economic effect of Kansas' military installations is greater than the eight largest employers in the state combined, bringing \$2 billion to the state's economy and providing nearly 70,000 jobs. In this latest BRAC round, Kansas ranks among the top states in the nation for personnel gains. The results of this report demonstrate what we in Kansas have known for a long time - our bases play an important role in the U.S. military.

Reducing Cuts to Farm Programs in the House Agriculture Budget

This week the House Agriculture Committee passed budget modifications aimed at reducing spending over the next five years. Paying for hurricanes and other disaster assistance, as well as our continuing efforts in the war in Iraq, has made it necessary to reduce spending to bring some order to the federal deficit.

The federal budget for agriculture accounts for 0.5 percent of the entire federal budget. Cuts to agriculture cannot and should not be the lone target for fixing the budget. As a member of the Agriculture Committee, I worked with my colleagues to weigh the diverse interests of production agriculture, trade, conservation, nutrition, research and rural economic development to ensure that no single program was faced with a disproportionate share of the cuts.

An important provision in the House agreement is that it maintains current farm bill policies and the agriculture safety net for the nation's farmers and ranchers. The Senate is voting on its budget package this week, and the House will vote next week.

As Congress works through this long and difficult budget process, I will continue working on behalf of agriculture to ensure producers are protected while also working to control the federal budget.

Program on New Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit to Air on Kansas Public TV

I will lead a panel discussion on the new Medicare prescription drug benefit during a special one-hour broadcast on Smoky Hills Public Television. "Medicare Part D: What Does it Mean for Kansas?" will air Wednesday, November 2, at 7:00 p.m.

The broadcast will take a close-up look at the new drug program, including its history, eligibility criteria, how to compare plans, the application procedure for extra help and resources available for further information.

Prescription drugs are a huge expense for Kansas seniors. As this new benefit is implemented, seniors need to know what their choices are so they can get the drug coverage that best meets their needs.

Joining me for the discussion will be Bud Nolker, Area Director with the Social Security Administration; Nancy Schmidt, Health Insurance Specialist with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; and Mary Lou Odle, a Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent with K-State Research and Extension, who is also a Senior Health Insurance Counselor of Kansas.

The program will also air Monday, November 14, at 9:30 p.m. on the Topeka PBS channel,

KTWU.

Bringing Agriculture to Congress - Reporting on the Plight of Kansas Farmers

This week I spoke to the U.S. House of Representatives about the concerns of farmers and ranchers. With the recent natural disasters and the rise of input prices to record levels, it is a difficult time to make a living on the farm.

More than any other profession, farmers are greatly affected by the high cost of fuel, fertilizer and natural gas. These factors fall beyond what a farm bill or crop insurance policy can adequately address and have made it a struggle for farmers and ranchers to feed the world as well as their own families. In my speech I shared the real struggles and stories of three Kansas families involved in agriculture.

I also encouraged my fellow Members of Congress to work together in these challenging times to pursue economic, agricultural and energy policies that increase the chances that our farmers have to continue farming the land and feeding the world.

For the full text of the speech, please visit: http://www.house.gov/apps/list/speech/_ks01_moran/sp102605StateFarmEconomy.html

Recognizing Breast Cancer Awareness Month

This week I met with two breast cancer survivors from the Kansas City area who were visiting Washington, D.C., for a reception honoring their advocacy efforts. Kim Carlos and Jennifer Johnson have co-written "Nordie's at Noon," a book detailing their personal stories and those of others who have battled this disease. Their message was personal and powerful as it highlighted the importance of spreading breast cancer awareness to help save lives.

It is estimated that over 1,700 Kansans will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, and 400 deaths will be attributed to this disease. October is National Breast Cancer Awareness month, making it a fitting time to recognize the individuals fighting this disease and honor those who have died. It is also an important time to spread the message of early detection to help increase breast cancer survival rates.

Working with National Sorghum Producers to Ensure Sorghum's Profitability

This week I worked with the National Sorghum Producers to encourage the Department of Agriculture to adjust the Loan Deficiency Payment rates of sorghum. In with the organization was Greg Shelor of Minneola to visit with me about the effects the adjustments have on his Kansas operation. Sorghum is a vital crop for Kansas producers and I was pleased with the USDA's changes to the sorghum payments.

In the Office

Kent Needham of Tonganoxie, Craig Meader of Waverly and Tom Page of Wichita were in my office this week representing the Kansas Bankers Association to discuss adequate access to credit in rural communities. Tim Rogers of Salina was in with the Salina Airport Authority to talk about the environmental cleanup of contaminants located at Salina Municipal Airport, the former location of Schilling Air Force Base, and the installation of a new radar system that will better cover air traffic in the region of Fort Riley and Salina.

Ann Kunkel of Kansas City was in with the University of Kansas Medical Center to discuss arthritis prevention and treatment. Steve and Cynthia Haynes of Oberlin stopped by my office this week to say hello. Steve and Cynthia own several northwest Kansas newspapers. Also stopping by my office while in Washington, D.C., were Jay and Susan Woofter of Hoxie and Dennis Woofter of Colby.

In my office this week for a tour of the Capitol building were Nadine Herold of Hays and her sister, Cheryl Miller of Manhattan, as were Joe and Susan Rebein of Leawood with their sons, John and Will. Also in for a tour were Vic and Kay Streufert of Lindsborg.

Very truly yours,

Jerry